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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington

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August 19, 1955

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Dear Dr. Flemming:

Recently there was organized under the aegis of the Assistant Director of ODM for Telecommunications, an ad hoc committee to study ways and means of enabling the State Department to assure itself of minimum essential facilities for exchange of telegraphic communications with and among United States Foreign Service posts abroad. The availability of facilities which can assure an uninterrupted flow of communications, particularly in times of emergency, is of grave concern to the Department.

Numerous instances of civil strife in foreign countries, which usually results in disruption of communication channels, such as that recently experienced in Buenos Aires, or deliberate jamming of civil and military circuits in time of war, make the availability of such facilities mandatory. The diplomatic service of the United States has been seriously handicapped in conducting its essential business when civil disruptions have occurred. In time of war, with the advent of jamming of civil and military circuits, the security of the nation may be adversely affected. The United States diplomatic service is in a poor competitive position with other world powers who are generally able to provide for their requirements because they do not find themselves restricted by law. The diplomatic service of the United States is restricted in its ability to reach bilateral agreement which, in most instances, would involve the granting of reciprocal privileges, by the restrictions contained in the Communications Act of 1934, as amended.

The ad hoc committee, comprised of representatives from ODM, OSD, FCC, FBI, CIA and State considered various aspects of the problem and concluded that a staff paper setting forth all relevant detail would facilitate its deliberation. A small working group from CIA and the Department of State have prepared such a paper which is attached. It is suggested that copies be made available to each member of the ad hoc committee for study. The Department also recognizes that other aspects of the problem may be raised and evaluated by the Committee.

The Honorable  
Arthur S. Flemming,  
Director, Office of Defense Mobilization.

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It is recognized that appropriate amendment of Sections 301 and 310 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, will be required if the United States is to be able to grant reciprocal privileges to foreign countries which request them as a quid pro quo for granting the United States the right to establish and maintain diplomatic wireless facilities. The committee should consider this aspect of the matter as well. Undoubtedly, appropriate consultation with Congress would be necessary in the event that an Executive Branch position favorable to the proposal eventuates.

Since it is impossible to anticipate when disruptions may occur in the provision of communications services abroad, I consider that the resolution of this problem warrants early action by all concerned.

Sincerely yours,

/s/Robert Murphy

Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosure:

Staff study. — *Where?*

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